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get their own back. Psychologists will say 'But this is all too positive! Positive aims in training, positive methods and, apparently, positive results. Were there no failures and breakdowns in the systems, no cleavages in the society, no maladjusted individuals?' Of course there were. Again the bold outlines have been essential in portraying a situation unfamiliar to many readers. And the rest of the answer to that criticism, as I hinted more than once in the book, lies in studies of individual Ngoni people and how they came out of the training process; and also in studies of the relation of schools and the education given in them to that somewhat rigid and self-consciously controlled Ngoni society. Both of these I hope to write one day, but this book is long enough already.

Young parents the world over are often surprised, and delighted (though not always), at the individual character shown by each of their children. They look in their children for signs of heredity and for evidence of the success or failure of their training. So did the Ngoni, and yet at the end they always came back to 'It is his own human nature'.

M. R.

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respect to all adults, whether Ngoni or not, whether of their family, or helpers in the household, or former captives. If children did not so behave to old and poor people, they were punished and made to feel ashamed as if they had failed to honour their own relatives.

A Ngoni elder when speaking of the testimony of early travellers in Ngoniland to the good manners found in Ngoni households said: 'Such honouring of each other came to the Ngoni because they liked living together without any scattering as was the custom of other Nyasaland people. . . . . Such honour was not shown by young people for fear of being beaten, but because all children were well taught that this behaviour was right and proper for the upbuilding of the land.'

The emphasis in this quotation is clearly on the connexion between personal behaviour and the integrity and prosperity of the Ngoni kingdom. When Ngoni elders were talking about child training and its effect on the future of the Ngoni people, they made constant reference to 'those who spoil the land'. The phrase was the same as taking the roof off a hut, i.e. destroying it for the purpose for which it was built. This determined emphasis on behaviour illustrated the Ngoni intention of regulating personal contacts within their society, so that harmonious relations would build up the society which quarrels and factions would destroy, and indeed had partly destroyed in some of the historic secessions from the kingdom. Harmonious personal relations are perhaps the covert if not the overt aim of all human societies from the individual family outwards. We see this however in sharp outline in Ngoni life, partly because they were acutely aware of the vulnerability from external influences of their society and way of living.

Two very ancient folk-tales illustrate Ngoni thinking about keeping their kingdom and society intact and maintaining their code of polite behaviour.

The first was taken down by me from a very old man who

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to himself: 'Can that be for me? No? Yes? It *is* me. I am ashamed.' No one said anything but the shamed one took the first chance of slipping away to avoid further public notice. The use of proverbs in this way were an effective way of making a child learn for himself and apply the lesson; and with children, as with adults, the use of proverbs was a way of 'saving face' when a direct rebuke in the presence of others would have caused overwhelming shame.

Ngoni ideas about nature and nurture

This fixed code of social behaviour between persons was instilled by Ngoni adults into their children from their early years. By the time they had their second teeth, a significant stage to the Ngoni, they were expected to conduct themselves towards other people according to this code. Their behaviour, in public at any rate, should be predictable, if those responsible for the teaching of 'respect' had carried out their task conscientiously. But, as the Ngoni themselves recognized, it was one thing to have a system of training with a desired goal in view. It was another thing to see how each individual child responded to the training, and either conformed to the code or resisted it. The Ngoni thought that the clue to conformity or resistance lay in the individual's character, and they talked a great deal about the character of their children. Such conversations generally arose when adults were watching a group of boys and girls carrying out a socially required or self-appointed task. They might be bringing back the cattle in the evening, practising for the *ngoma* dance, grinding bulrush millet for snacks for the little children, asking each other riddles or telling a story. Some of the tasks called for intelligence, some for physical strength, some for initiative or organizing ability, some for eloquence.

Character, so the Ngoni thought, came from two sources, inborn qualities and acquired qualities. The first they called *mabadidwe*, literally those things which an individual was born with. These included physical resemblances to their

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828 parents, such as colour of skin, shape of face and features,
827 posture and carriage, speaking voice; and the less tangible qualities such as control of temper, power to command others, eloquence in speech, as well as anti-social characteristics such as cruelty, rages, meanness, jealousy. Both kinds of inborn qualities, physical and moral, could come from either parent. In the case of the average child, who was not outstanding in any way, few comments if any were made on his heredity. But if a child showed outstanding ability or powers of leadership, or was on the contrary always quarrelling or showing off or sulking, they looked for an explanation of such qualities in his parentage.

828 Yet heredity was not in Ngoni thinking the only explana-
867 tion for a child's character. Nor did they believe that it always followed that a cruel father had vicious sons, nor a mother who was tactful and pacific, daughters showing the same traits. They thought character, though partly inherited, was modified by and moulded by acquired qualities due to training. In the case of bad inherited qualities they could be, it was hoped, corrected by persistent training. When desirable qualities were shown by either or both parents it was always hoped that the child would also show them, and that good upbringing would ensure their development. They were always puzzled when sons of outstanding men and daughters of distinguished women turned out badly.

The acquired qualities were known as *makhalidwe*, the root of which was *kukhala*. This was a word used in a great many contexts with different meanings in each. In the context of child training it was used to mean to behave, with the added implication that it was what a person was like, due to his behaviour. *Makhalidwe* was used therefore, in the sense of conduct, implying behaviour in all relationships and including what had been acquired through response to training.

As we shall see later, Ngoni elders were afraid to leave a child, especially a girl after the age of seven or so, in her

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mother's household if the mother showed obvious signs of being a "bad character". They might take the child away and put her with some relative of acknowledged 'good character', in the hope of offsetting the effects of heredity by careful training.

In later childhood and especially on the threshold of adulthood, as we shall see in Chapters VI and VII, boys and girls were expected to learn and practise traditional Ngoni skills and to be conversant with traditional Ngoni knowledge. Skills and knowledge, or rather the ability to use them, might be inherited from a parent, but they were generally regarded as acquired qualities. In any case, they needed careful training and direction in order that they might be fully developed.

Ngoni cultural values

After the Scottish Mission had been in North Nyasaland for some time, and the Bible and other Christian literature had been translated into the vernacular, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* became one of the most popular and widely read books in Ngoniland, both by older children and by adults. The reason was that its imagery portrayed so many ideas and situations which the Ngoni recognised as being relevant for them in the new world to which they had to adapt themselves. It became for Ngoni Christians, and for many others too since it was told far more often than it was read, a new kind of folk-tale, and was told as such to children in school and in the villages. The themes of striving towards a goal, and fighting lions and giants on the way, and listening to good advice as well as hearing bad—these and other themes were recognised as in the Ngoni tradition although in such a different setting.

In the final chapter of this book we shall talk about personality and character among the Ngoni, looking at the ideas of basic personality as set out by Linton and others, and trying to see how training at different stages of childhood had been converging towards the ideal personality of the Ngoni

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264 might be a chore but when it was done in the open it was also an advertisement of high standards.

The art of speech

191 The Ngoni believed that as boys and girls neared adult life
195 they should be well drilled in the art of speaking, because it was regarded as a basic Ngoni characteristic. We have seen how adults watched children tossing riddles at each other to test, among other things, their quickness of speech. Girls had been watched telling stories to see how they held their audience and showed a sense of dramatic values in recitation.

In all the standardized forms of speech such as greetings, messages, announcements, responses, young adults were expected to speak clearly and correctly, without mumbling but not too loudly. When relating an event, such as a visit, a bull-fight, or when giving evidence in the courts, they had to give an orderly account without repetition. Otherwise they were told: 'You are speaking badly. Tell it again, in order, from the beginning.' An ordered sequence of the narrative was always demanded, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, they used proverbs frequently to impress on people speaking the need to get to the point, while leaving out nothing of importance.

533 The art of words used with music in songs was regarded as a special gift and those who possessed it were encouraged to develop it. Inspiration for words and music was as we have seen something which came 'from the chest' and was regarded almost as if it was a special kind of breathing. Some used this gift to sing with a solo instrument such as a stringed lyre. Others used it to compose new songs for *ngoma* dances.
[177] Others again wrote Christian hymns and composed music for them, or set them to traditional Ngoni tunes.

The art of dancing

535 'Ngoni people think that their dances show their personality,
● [828] their manhood, that which was born in them.' Phrases like

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this overt response to training, character is the distinctive individual twist given to the basic personality, together with certain special abilities and individual traits which might be in harmony with, or at variance with, the basic personality traits. When an individual showed abilities and traits which harmonised with the concept of the basic personality, he was recognized as a 'good character'. If however he developed traits which eventually showed his failure to adjust to the basic personality, then he was, or would probably become, a 'bad character'. The 'badness' was his responsibility due to a series of choices which he had made, though it might also reflect on the training given in his earlier years. (21) 828

The Ngoni had a word which very nearly expressed their concept of individual character. They spoke of a person's 'own human nature' (*Ubuntu*), 'the human nature of himself'. Thus they recognized, as studies of personality and culture are bound to recognize, two distinct results of child training, arising from the interweaving of the threads of teaching and learning, namely the development of young men and women into Ngoni adults whom the society regarded as fulfilling, at least to some extent, their ideals of behaviour, skills and knowledge; and the development of young individual adults, distinguishable each from his fellows by the individual character he displayed before his elders who either approved or disapproved of him.

Anthropologists on the whole would agree with Kluckhohn that so far they have studied personality as a socially directed product rather than the unique product of each individual's growth and development. Individual reactions and responses are recognized as being primarily in the field of psychology. But the anthropologist and the educationist can make some claim to understanding this essential complement to individual personality studies. On the one hand they find the society they are studying recognizing values which do not always fit into an accepted basic personality pattern. On the other hand they become aware that individual reactions to (21)

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and demonstration of the group values. The first two, physical and moral strength, and working hard and persistently at allotted tasks, were, as we have seen, instilled into children from the stage of second teeth onward. The second two, dignity and wisdom, were to a large extent values implicit in adult life, and in the case of wisdom seen specially in the contribution made by senior men and women to community life. Dignity, however, had an ambivalent meaning, as did dominance among the group values. It covered not only language, deportment, self-control, accepted rank and precedence within the hierarchy on all social occasions, but the more subtle and very typical Ngoni attitude towards 'losing face'. In the sense that young adults and even older children hated being rebuked in public because it made them lose face, it belonged to younger people as well as to older, to those called the 'humble ones' as well as to the 'great ones'.

All the emphases in child training on language, deportment, self-control, manners and inter-personal behaviour of all kinds were related to the value of human dignity, and to the concept of a person's 'human nature' as being something to be respected and built up, and carefully guarded, since it was very vulnerable.

At the end of Chapter II when some Ngoni values were mentioned, wisdom was contrasted with cleverness, and equated with knowledge, good judgement, ability to control others and keep the peace, and skill in the use of speech. The young Ngoni headmaster in the first village described in Chapter I said reflectively one evening, after listening to some of the elders talking with me about Ngoni values, 'Yes, we are different in our generation. We are proud, but they had wisdom.' It was an acknowledgement of the pretensions which his generation had begun to claim as a result of the new knowledge in the schools. It was also a recognition that the accumulated wisdom of the generations of his father and grandfather had in it an understanding of values which the younger generation had not yet acquired.

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181 577 828 [182] The four so-called personal values will be reflected in the Ngoni personality traits which we are going on to discuss. There are however two values which did not appear to fit into any integrated system, and which yet recurred as themes in Ngoni culture, and here and there in the ideas inherent in child training. One was the theme of childhood innocence, which was much deeper and more subtle than merely keeping children in ignorance of sexual life and intercourse. The other was the value set on the 'gentle' man. He was a man who appeared to be almost wholly self-controlled, able to have normal sexual intercourse with his wives but not always thinking about women, showing sternness but without anger, being just but also merciful. These were the qualities looked for in the man responsible for the guardianship of certain head villages where the ancestor cult was [769] carried on, and who was entrusted with the ritual associated [778] with the ancestor cult. In the more ancient ritual, such as carrying the sacred emblem before the armies, it was young boys, exemplifying the childhood innocence theme, who were entrusted with this charge. In the more modern con- [793] texts, many of the outstanding Ngoni ministers in the church were recognized and revered as 'gentle' men.

The Ngoni ideal personality

577 Chapters IV and V, as well as Chapters VI and VII, showed that there were certain elements in the Ngoni ideal of what their children should be like which were common to young men and women, to boys and girls, while others were emphasized only for girls or for boys. Among the common traits we have already seen the outstanding emphasis on 'respect' in all forms of behaviour and in all kinds of contact with older people, and with others who should be 'honoured'. Part of this respect was shown in obedience, and with this obedience in all the detailed inter-personal relations with senior people was associated, in the individual's relations to society as a whole, being law-abiding and complying with Ngoni law.

[P.22]

CHAPTER III

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

1. The field of modern marriage

581 MARRIAGE nowadays among the Ngoni still regulates the sexual activities of man and wife and determines the responsibility for the care of their young children, the inheritance of their property, and succession to office. To a lesser extent it still determines residence and establishes relationships between a partner to the marriage and his or her affines. It is an institution which involves sooner or later almost every Ngoni man or woman who survives into adulthood. The number of people who die adult and [826] unmarried is very small. Even albinos, who are regarded generally with disgust, usually succeed in marrying. The only people who 589 fail to marry at all are: seriously crippled people who are regarded as not strong enough to look after themselves; a few prostitutes who [548] acquire a reputation for wantonness before they have managed to find a husband and who live in a succession of temporary alliances with men in and around the township of Fort Jameson; and a category of persons known as 'quite useless people',[1] that is, people [828] who are mad or in some way deranged so that they are unable to settle down in any place and are always wandering about from village to village, begging shelter, beer and food.

A man who does not marry, or who remains divorced or widowed for many years, is regarded as unusual, and others say of him that he must smell like a he-goat so that no woman will have him. A man in his twenties without a wife is laughed at by the married women, who despise him as impotent. Very few men in fact stay long without a wife, and of people whose personalities are regarded as normal it is only a few old widowers who do not have a wife to cook for them and sleep with them. Some women stay for longer [162] without a husband, partly because of the numerical preponderance of women over men caused by labour migration.

128 Some idea of the extent to which marriage affects everyone sooner or later is given by Tables III and IV. These tables, like all the others in this paper, are based on information collected systematically 121 from six Ngoni villages. Two of these villages, containing 257 and 142 residents, situated twenty-five miles apart and in different counties, were selected for me to live in by the county chiefs concerned. The remaining four villages containing 143, 104, 55 and 45 [621] residents, were close together but in a third county and twenty miles away from the other two.

[1] *Cisilu*, pl. *visilu*, or else *wantu watyalatyala*. Cf. Nsenga *silu*, pl. *masilu*, idiot.